

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for representing records, the method comprising:
 - 2 assigning a unique identifier to a record stored at a record collection site;
 - 3 entering the unique identifier in a hierarchical tree structure; and
 - 4 sending the hierarchical tree structure to a central storage site.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprises:
 - 2 using the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report; and
 - 3 sending the aggregate report to the central storage site.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1 further comprises:
 - 2 using the unique identifier at the central storage site to access the record stored at the record collection site.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the unique identifier includes information representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.
- 1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the node is located in a higher position of the hierarchical tree structure than the unique identifier.
- 1 6. The method of claim 2, wherein using the unique identifier to produce the aggregate report includes counting the unique identifier with a second unique identifier assigned to a second record stored at the record collection site.
- 1 7. The method of claim 2, wherein using the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report includes summing data included in the record accessed by the unique identifier with data included in a second record accessed by a second unique identifier.
- 1 8. The method of claim 4, wherein a unique key that includes information representing a second node in the hierarchical tree structure is assigned to the node.
- 1 9. A computer program product, tangibly embodied in an information carrier, for representing records, the computer program product being operable to cause a machine to:
 - 2 assign a unique identifier to a record stored at a record collection site;

4 enter the unique identifier in a hierarchical tree structure; and
5 send the hierarchical tree structure to the central storage site.

1 10. The computer program product of claim 9, being further operable to cause a
2 machine to:

3 use the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report; and
4 send the aggregate report to a central storage site.

1 11. The computer program product of claim 9, being further operable to cause a
2 machine to:

3 use the unique identifier at the central storage site to access the record stored
4 at the record collection site.

1 12. The computer program product of claim 9, wherein the unique identifier includes
2 information representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.

1 13. The computer program product of claim 12, wherein the node is located in a
2 higher position of the hierarchical tree structure than the unique identifier.

1 14. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein using the unique identifier
2 to produce the aggregate report includes counting the unique identifier with a second unique
3 identifier assigned to a second record stored in at the record collection site.

1 15. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein using the unique identifier
2 to produce the aggregate report includes summing data included in the record accessed by the
3 unique identifier with data included in a second record accessed by a second unique
4 identifier.

1 16. The computer program product of claim 12, wherein a unique key that includes
2 information representing a second node in the hierarchical tree structure is assigned to the
3 node.

1 17. A method for representing records, the method comprising:

2 receiving a hierarchical tree structure at a central storage site from a record
3 collection site, the hierarchical tree structure includes a unique identifier assigned to a
4 record stored at the record collection site.

1 18. The method of claim 17 further comprising:
2 using the unique identifier to access the record stored at the record collection
3 site.

1 19. The method of claim 17 further comprising:
2 receiving an aggregate report at the central storage site produced at the record
3 collection site using the unique identifier.

1 20. The method of claim 17, wherein the unique identifier includes information
2 representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.

1 21. A method for representing records, the method comprising:
2 assigning a unique identifier to a record stored at a record collection site;
3 entering the unique identifier in a hierarchical tree structure at the record
4 collection site;
5 sending the hierarchical tree structure to a central storage site; and
6 using the unique identifier at the central storage site to access the record
7 stored at the record collection site.

1 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the unique identifier at the record collection
2 site is used to produce an aggregate report that is sent to the central storage site.

1 23. The method of claim 21, wherein the unique identifier includes information
2 representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.

1 24. A system comprising:
2 a record collection site that includes a computer system that assigns a unique
3 identifier to a record stored at the record collection site and enters the unique identifier in a
4 hierarchical tree structure; and

5 a central storage site that receives the hierarchical tree structure from the record
6 collection site.

1 25. The system of claim 24, wherein the computer system at the record collection site
2 uses the unique identifier to produce an aggregate report and initiates transmission of the
3 aggregate report to the central storage site.

1 26. The system of claim 24, wherein the unique identifier includes information
2 representing a node located in the hierarchical tree structure.